

Youth Safety at 4-H in Canada – Frequently Asked Questions

Club Meetings and Project Work

Q: Are two trained leaders/screened volunteers required for every meeting or event?

A: **Yes.** At minimum one (1) trained leader/staff (A) and an additional screened volunteer (B), who are not spouses, must attend the meeting and be responsible for youth. Additional non-screened guests (C) may be required to meet the Programming Supervision Ratios required to safely deliver programs, depending on the number of youth members in attendance, and the activity.

While all trained leaders and screened volunteers must be screened, only trained leaders must complete the Provincial 4-H Training, Child Protection Training (Commit to Kids), Youth Safety Training, and Event or Position Training. A screened volunteer only needs to complete the Event or Position Training and sign the Code of Conduct.

Spouses may be part of the club leadership team, but there must always be a third trained leader or screened volunteer to ensure there is a third party that is not legally bound to the couple in case of financial or other misconduct.

Q: Am I considered a trained leader if I have not completed the Commit to Kids training?

A: **No.** To be considered a trained leader, you must:

- complete the Child Protection Training (Commit to Kids) online course (or Put the Child First classroom training in British Columbia); and
- complete the Youth Safety Training and other training required by 4-H in your province.

Each club must have at least one trained leader when the new club year begins in 2020. Those who have not completed the Child Protection Training may be a screened volunteer instead.

Q: What should I do if I arrive early to a meeting and another trained leader or screened volunteer is not present?

A: If you need to prepare for an activity or clear equipment to make the space safe and ready, do so before the members arrive. For your space to be ready, there must be two (2) trained leaders/screened volunteers. Here are the steps to take:

1. Stay outside in plain view.
2. Ask a parent to stay with you with the youth member(s) until another trained leader/screened volunteer arrives.
3. Do not let any youth members into the meeting space until another trained leader/screened volunteer is present.



An Incident Report must be completed and submitted to your provincial organization if a situation made it necessary for an adult to be alone with a youth member.

Q: There is only one member interested in a project. Is it appropriate for a leader to work with the youth member alone?

A: **No.** In addition to the provincial project rules, the Rule of Two requires that two (2) trained leaders/screened volunteers be present for sanctioned and insured project meetings, and group project work. As 4-H encourages youth to explore their unique interests, when there are not two (2) trained leaders/screened volunteers to lead a project the youth can undertake an independent project and attend the achievement day with other projects in the club. Please reach out to your provincial organization for specific details on the requirements for an independent project.

Activities that abide by all policies are sanctioned 4-H events and have insurance coverage for youth, leaders, volunteers, staff, and invited guests. It is the responsibility of the parent/guardian to provide supervision for any project work completed at home (i.e. homework), or if the youth engages expertise outside of the club (i.e. a vet).

For example:

- If a member is housing their livestock project on a neighbour's or trained leader/screened volunteer's property, it is the sole responsibility of the parent/guardian to provide supervision for any visit.
- If a member is working on an independent sewing project and visits a local seamstress, it is the sole responsibility of the parent/guardian to provide supervision.
- If a livestock project requires a husbandry visit, the parent/guardian must provide supervision when the trained leader or screened volunteer conducts the husbandry visit.

Please note that a trained leader/screened volunteer working at home with their own children is considered independent work. For example, if you were also your child's 8th-grade teacher, any assistance you provide outside of the classroom would be as a parent and not as their teacher.

Q: Do special guests or speakers need to be screened?

A: **No.** They do not need to be screened but must abide by the Code of Conduct of 4-H in Canada. There must always be two (2) trained leaders/screened volunteers within eyesight and earshot of guests or speakers, working with the youth members. This applies to classrooms as well as other settings.

For example, a clinician instructing riders in a riding arena. Unscreened parents there to watch do not count as a trained leader/screened volunteer.

Q: Our club often meets at a livestock barn where youth members are working with their animals. How many leaders must attend?

A: Please refer to the Programming Supervision Ratios table in the **Supervision Policy**. Keep in mind that no youth member should ever be isolated, especially if there are non-screened adults at the venue as well. Have members working in a buddy system, within earshot of at least two (2) trained leaders/screened volunteers. As the trained leader/screened volunteer, it is your responsibility to ensure you are creating a safe environment for the youth, and you must plan the activities accordingly. If you cannot always keep an eye on the safety of the members, then you will need support from more screened adults.

Q: How does the Rule of Two apply to email and other communication apps?

A: Two (2) trained leaders/screened volunteers must be included in all communications with youth. For example, a second trained leader/screened volunteer must be copied on any emails sent to youth members, or a group chat/messaging tool must be used. Refer to the **Guidelines for Electronic Communication and Virtual 4-H Meetings** for more examples.

Q: For some project activities there may be limited equipment, or the activity requires very close supervision to ensure it is safe. Can a trained leader work individually with youth? For example, a trained leader creates a schedule for each member to come by their shop for welding practice or their horse ring for riding practice. Is this practice covered by 4-H insurance if two leaders are not there?

A: If another trained leader or screened volunteer cannot be in attendance to ensure the Rule of Two throughout the one on one activity, then a parent must stay. Parent supervision is always the highest standard when it comes to their own children. If plans are made to ensure supervision and safety policies are met, then this would be a sanctioned and insured part of the program. Such activities or practices should be offered to all members to ensure equity.

Remember, boarding of animals is considered a private arrangement between families and is not part of official 4-H programming and insurance. Parents are responsible for all supervision of youth working independently with animals regardless of where they are boarded.

Q: I'm a 4-H leader and have my own riding stable. Many of my riding students are also 4-H members and work in the barn. Do I always have to follow the Rule of Two in my private lessons with 4-H members?

A: When 4-H members are riding during a 4-H meeting or event, the Rule of Two must be followed, and leaders should communicate all safety protocols. The 4-H leaders and youth have accident and liability coverage in case an injury or damage occurs during the 4-H meeting and riding.

Any riding outside of the 4-H meetings or formal practices is considered independent work and is a private arrangement between the families and the stable owner and instructor, not as a 4-H leader. This should be clearly communicated to 4-H families. The stable would be liable for any injury during private lessons or work. When you are a 4-H leader and wear other hats as a private coach or employer of youth, you should consider following the Rule of Two across all of your roles as this is youth industry safety standard.

Emergencies

Q: What do I do if a youth member gets sick or injured during an activity?

A: If a youth member must leave the activity for medical attention, and there are only two (2) trained leaders/screened volunteers, all participants must stop the activity.

- If there are enough trained leaders/screened volunteers so that two (2) can accompany the sick/injured youth and two (2) can continue with the group, then the group can separate, and the activity can continue.
- When an ill or injured youth member needs to be examined, maintain his/her privacy to the extent possible, and always examine him/her with another adult present.
- Do not remove clothing from an injured 4-H youth member unless essential for his/her well-being. This should be done by a health professional, if possible.
- Notifying the provincial office of minor or serious incidents related to illness, injury, accidents, or safety concerns. Refer to your provincial organization's Safety Assessment and Management Procedures for more details.

Driving

Q: When driving to fairs, events, on Club to Club Exchanges or during fundraisers, does there have to be two adults in each vehicle?

A: **Yes.** You must avoid any situation where you are alone with youth. Please refer to the Transportation Policy:

- Transportation is not part of a leader's role. Parents and guardians are responsible for transporting youth to and from 4-H meetings and events, and for ensuring two (2) trained leaders or screened volunteers are present before departing.
- Personal travel is not considered part of the 4-H program. Families who wish to arrange to carpool with other families do so at their own risk and should review their personal automobile insurance.
- Travel as a club to a sanctioned event is considered to be part of the 4-H program and is insured if the commercial transportation or carpooling is documented in an Activity Plan, is reviewed by the provincial office, and is shared with parents in advance. The Rule of Two applies in each vehicle.
- In the case of an emergency, and if a youth must be transported, ensure there is no child seated alone in the same row as an adult. There must be one (1) screened adult in the front seat, with children in the back seat.

Q: Our club is organizing carpool transportation for a day trip to an agri-exhibition. Can parents in our club be drivers?

A: If a parent is to be a driver for 4-H organized transportation or is supervising members other than their own children, then the parent must complete the 4-H screening process. Two trained

leaders/screened volunteers are required in each vehicle. An activity plan must be completed for 4-H-organized transportation and it must be shared with all families.

Remember, the two trained leaders/screened volunteers in each vehicle must not be spouses.

Travel

Q: A leader from our club is travelling with a youth to an event where they will be one of the chaperones. Can a single leader travel with a youth?

A: Please refer to the Youth Travel Policy for more details:

- While youth are travelling by air/train/ bus to meet up with the larger group, youth may travel some portion on their own or with only one (1) chaperone. The chaperone must apply the Rule of Two to avoid being one-on-one in vulnerable situations. For example, if the youth becomes ill, engage another adult/travel staff for assistance.
- When the youth/group reaches the program, the club, hosting chaperones, and staff will follow the Rule of Two and Programming Supervision Ratios. If a travel issue arises and an emergency hotel stay is required, chaperones must ensure they have their own accommodation and must follow the Rule of Two to the best of their ability. For example, if only one (1) chaperone is present, they could engage hotel staff to assist with room checks and gather to meet and eat in public spaces.

Camps, Conferences, and Other Trips

Q: When completing room checks during a camp or conference, do we need two trained leaders/chaperones?

A: **Yes.** Please refer to the Supervision Policy for more details:

- At a minimum, one (1) staff member (A) and one (1) overnight chaperone (B), who are not spouses, must attend national and provincial programs or camps, and be responsible for youth members.
- When conducting room checks, two (2) trained leaders, chaperones or camp counsellors must stand in the doorway and look in the room to ensure they see each member or have them call out to hear their voices. Adults must never enter a youth's room, cabin, or tent alone.
- Female chaperones must check female youth member rooms and male chaperones must check male youth member rooms.
- If there is only one male chaperone, a female chaperone can accompany him (or vice versa), but it is the male chaperone who must look into the male rooms (and vice versa).

Q: Can two screened leaders sleep in the same tent or hotel room as members?

A: **No.** Below are the guidelines from the Supervision Policy to use when planning accommodations for events:

- There must be separate accommodations for youth, participants over the provincial age of majority, and trained leaders, screened volunteers, or chaperones.
- There must be separate accommodations for male and female (or based on how they identify). Consider using a blank line on registration forms that allows youth to self identify. Follow-up with youth directly to plan accommodations that ensure everyone feels safe and included. Please refer to the **Inclusion Policy** for more information on inclusion in 4-H.
- Camp counsellors under the provincial age of majority may share accommodations with youth provided there are two (2) counsellors in the shared accommodation.
- If necessary, a parent, guardian or older sibling may share a room with their own children or sibling only, but it is best if all youth have the same experience by sharing rooms between themselves.
- When adults are rooming together, be considerate of matching general ages and level of authority. For example, do not match a young leader with a Board member as this creates an imbalance of authority, similar to the authority a leader would have with a youth member.
- Adult leaders and chaperones who are spouses may room together. As youth see leaders and chaperones as role models and representative of 4-H values, be sure to model a healthy relationship and put the needs of the youth first. Refer to the **Code of Conduct for 4-H in Canada** for more information.

Q: Can older members participating in camp as counsellors share a cabin or tent with younger members?

A: **Yes.** However, the Rule of Two must be followed. Here are the guidelines from the **Supervision Policy**:

- The trained leader or screened volunteers must be on-site and easily reachable.
- Camp counsellors under the provincial age of majority may share accommodations with youth provided there are two (2) counsellors in the shared accommodation.
- There must be separate accommodations for youth, participants over the provincial age of majority, and trained leaders, screened volunteers, or chaperones.

In addition to the camp counsellors, there must always be two (2) trained leaders/screened volunteers in close enough proximity to provide supervision and support as needed. If a member needs assistance, e.g. to go to an outhouse in the night, they may take a buddy or be accompanied by two (2) counsellors or leaders.

As participants over the age of majority may not share rooms with youth participants, please carefully consider your accommodation plans and the age limits for participants.

Q: Can youth members share a room with a parent at a camp or conference?

A: **Yes.** If necessary, a parent, guardian, or older sibling may share a room with their own children or sibling only, but it is best if all youth have the same experience by sharing rooms between themselves.

Q: Do we need two trained leaders or screened volunteers in each breakout room at a conference?

A: When breaking members into groups at conferences and events, you must plan for enough supervision to have two (2) trained leaders or screened volunteers with each group. If this is not possible, e.g. in venues with multiple rooms, trained leaders or screened volunteers must be circulating amongst the groups, and doors must remain open. If doors need to be closed for presentations at a conference, a trained leader or screened volunteer must be in the room with an unscreened guest and the youth members.

When breaking into smaller groups while attending a fair, public venue like a museum, or volunteering at an event, ensure there is a trained leader, screened volunteer, or parent with each small group of youth. The groups must remain on site. Ensure all groups can easily contact the trained leader in charge in case of an emergency.

Q: Do we need two trained leaders or chaperones in each home during an exchange program?

A: While the Rule of Two must be followed in each home, parents of the host family are screened and count towards the Rule of Two. Parents do not have to be trained leaders, but they are required to complete the 4-H Canada screening and police screening.

In the case of single-parent homes, a visiting chaperone or another person over the age of 18 who has also been screened for the hosting program must also stay in the home.

Anyone in the home who is over the age of majority must be screened.

Q: How do we best supervise outdoor activities, such as canoeing?

A: Two (2) trained leaders/screened volunteers are not required in each canoe, but they must always be able to see and hear youth. Trained leaders are responsible for ensuring a safe environment for the youth and must plan the activities accordingly. If you cannot keep an eye on the safety of the members at all times, then you will need support from more screened volunteers and parents to achieve appropriate ratios.

Q: Can youth and adults share accommodations in a gymnasium?

A: It is appropriate to plan overnight accommodations in one large room. Keep the following in mind:

- The trained leader or screened volunteers must be on-site and easily reachable.
- There must be separate changing and bathroom facilities for males and females (or based on how they identify) that are divided for youth and adults.
- Designate separate sleeping areas within the gymnasium for youth participants and trained leaders, screened volunteers, or chaperones.
- Ensure sufficient supervision throughout the night. Consider stationing chaperones at the main entrances and ensure youth are not wandering into other areas of the facility



This document has been adapted from Scouts Canada's "The Two Scouter Rule and Section Ratios: Supervision for Scouting Programs" document and the Girl Guides of Canada's "Adult Member Support Module 4: Girl Protection and Self Harm" document.